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ABSTRACT

Linguistics as it relates to teaching children is discussed under the headings (1) Linguistics and Language and (2) Reading and Linguistics. In the first part, many interesting facts about our language are pointed out, along with the manner and usefulness of presenting them to children. While linguists may seem to be communicating mainly among themselves in their terminology, much of what they are saying about language development, its function and use, and principles governing it can help to clarify and expand the child's concepts and use of language. In the second part, Reading and Linguistics, reading is defined in terms of what happens as you read--that is, you recognize the symbols, put meaning into them, and react on the basis of past experience. References are made to studies which indicate the close relationship of the language a child uses, his skill with it, and the ease with which he learns to read. In the light of these and other studies, different methods of teaching reading are discussed. Educators are urged to familiarize themselves with evolving ideas about language and to pick and choose materials and methods adapted to applying these ideas. (DH)

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FOREWORD

No curricula area in elementary education is of greater concern to lay persons as well as professional educators than Reading. Historically, the pendulum of methodology has swung from one technique to another. Innumerable devices and teaching aids have been invented in the almost continuously frenetic effort to find the best way to teach a person to read. This inordinately vigorous activity designed to improve the communications curriculum of the school is certainly warranted. For, parents and teachers recognize that Reading is the "keystone" to academic success.

It is not by chance or accident then, that the College of Education of the Texas Woman's University is particularly interested in being identified as a service and resource center in the teaching of Reading and the language arts. The annual conference in Reading is designed to enrich our undergraduate and graduate program of teacher education as well as to provide a lecture, demonstration and discussion forum for in-service teachers and supervisors of the State and region.

The reader of these proceedings will be pleased with the quality and appropriateness of the lectures as well as the significant and meaningful questions and comments of the discussants. We are delighted to have the eminent authority on Reading, Dr. Ruth Strickland, as a principal lecturer and consultant and her two addresses, in particular, as recorded in the proceedings constitute a most valuable addition to the literature in this area of study.

I would commend Dr. Rose Spicola, program chairman and editor of these proceedings and the capable members of her Forum Committee: Miss Juanita Prater and Dr. Aileen Griffin. The tremendous success of this program is due, for the most part, to the enthusiastic and effective work of the three Reading specialists who constituted the membership of the Forum Committee and the many other colleagues and students who assisted in the activity.

TED W. BOOKER
Dean

May 29, 1967

LINGUISTICS AND LANGUAGE

Dr. Ruth Strickland

Madam Chairman, and friends: I always think when the subject that has been assigned to me has in it the word linguistics that I need to remind my audience at the very outset that I am not a linguist. I am a teacher of children: a teacher of elementary school teachers who have become interested in linguistics and are looking into the field to see what we can find useful, what we can apply to our teaching of boys and girls.

It seems to me that we need very badly nowadays not just to look at what one group of people or another are offering to us, but to look around the world and see what is being done with language and the effect of language on human interaction. I keep asking my students to watch the newspapers and the magazines for evidence of the effect of language problems on all aspects of human life. You remember not so long ago — within the last year and a half — that there have been two riots in southern India which grew out of the fact that when India gained her independence from Britain, she selected one of her more than 800 languages and dialects to be dubbed the official language of India. Because the language an individual learns as a child is very dear to him, is very much a part of him, he does not easily lay it aside for another. The problems of India, the problems of Pakistan that my students keep telling me of, the problems of the Philippines, the problems of many of the newly emerging nations of Africa grow out of the fact that within the boundaries of the new countries are people who speak many languages. And, as I said, those languages are dear to them so that language presents real problems in welding a nation of the diverse peoples in some of these new countries.

Language has had an influence on the history of every country in the world. It always troubles me when I find middle-grade teachers here in the United States studying with their children, perhaps in third grade or fourth grade, the history of their own region, how it came to be, and the people who settled it, or teaching fifth and sixth grade children about the settlement of the United States, the people who came, from what countries they came, the fact that they brought a few goods and chattels, that they came for certain purposes, but never telling children that they brought a language, and that that language — at least for many of them — was the English language. It didn't sound exactly as the language sounds today but it *was* English.

And we all know, if we stop to think back, the language that was brought to the early Virginia colonies by Captain John Smith and his followers, the language that Miles Standish and his companions brought to the Plymouth area, was the very language that Shakespeare was writing in England at that time. To be sure, these were common folk who probably spoke the English of the common folk of England at that period, but it was English, and the language began to change the moment they set foot on these shores.

After all, as the linguists keep telling us, any language that is spoken by people is a growing, changing thing, because language does change as things happen to people. The only way one could keep a language stationary, would be to let it die, to let it cease to be used in day by day interaction by living people. So, a language changes. And this English which our forefathers brought to the eastern seaboard began to change immediately because they found new flora and fauna, and aborigines that they had not

known before. They had experiences that no Englishman had ever had in the history of the people and so the language began to change. And it has continued to change all through the years, but at *no* time has it changed as rapidly as it's changing today, because at no time in the history of man have we amassed new knowledge as rapidly as we're amassing it now. That is a very important point to keep in mind as we study language and as we use language with boys and girls, with students at any age level. It seems to me that we have an obligation as we deal with language, to tie language into everything else that we are doing. Certainly we cannot teach social studies, and teach them with any kind of good sense, without calling attention to the fact that language has influenced what happened to people, and what happened to people has influenced language.

At any rate, language changes, language is modified, as things happen to people. We have tended all to often, to teach language to our boys and girls as though it were not a living thing but a dead one, which accounts, I think, for the fact that in several studies in which people have asked children which subjects they like best in school they have put our subject — English and language — down in the sub-basement. This is not because they don't love language, but because they don't love what we do with it in school.

The scholars have been busy in our times studying language. The reason for that stands out very clearly. As time has moved on, as communication and transportation have developed, the world, we are told, over and over and over again, has become a smaller place, we have closer contact than ever before with the people in it. These people speak well over 3,000 languages, some of which have no written form, some of which are ancient languages, and these languages have many offshoots, many dialects. And, of course, all of this influences what happens in the world today. As the linguists have studied languages and the basic structures of them, they have found some kinds of similarities, some kinds of differences, and found very clearly, as Edward Hall has brought out in his little book, *The Silent Language*, that the language that one learns as a child determines his outlook on the world. I was interested in hearing Brock Chisholm, the first head of the World Health Organization, at a little meeting on our campus, say that he felt that a child growing up in a home, develops not only his attitude toward himself, but his attitude toward other people, toward life on the earth, toward man's relations with man, as he develops his language. The kinds of attitudes that we develop very definitely grow out of the way in which things are said, the way in which language is used. This is something our children would be interested in knowing as they study the countries of the world, and the people, their customs, and the ways of thinking which they have developed. The cultures of the world differ in part because the languages of the world differ. And the languages differ, of course, because of the differences in the culture.

I wonder how many of us who work in elementary schools have ever pulled down the map and said to the children, "Let's find on this map of the world all that we can of the English speaking people." Where are we? We are scattered very widely, from southern Australia, New Zealand, and parts of South Africa, to northern Canada with many places in between. It would be impossible to have that many people, well over a half billion of us, speaking a language, and speaking it identically.

British English differs here and there from American English. I happened to be on a bus in Europe a few years ago, when a Australian got on, picked up a little gray lace veil that dropped in the aisle, dangled it before me and said 'Little lady, Did you lose this gray lace veil? He put

a long *i* every point I would put a long *a* and yet both of us would write those words identically, if we were writing them because that's the way the English language operates. We do not speak it identically and yet we understand each other throughout the English speaking world.

There are differences in dialect in various parts of England, Australia, and South Africa, but there are differences in dialects in the United States as well. If you doubt that, I ask you to think with me a moment on the dialects of our last five presidents. Some of you can think back to President Roosevelt's fireside chats, and you remember his language which was definitely aristocratic New York speech with a Harvard accent. And then you remember we had a Missourian whose speech when he was angry or irritated had in it spice which some people didn't like. And then we had a Kansan and I consider Kansas speech about the flattest of any speech in the United States. Of course, his vocabulary had in it many words that came from his army experiences and travels around the world. And then you remember we had a New England scholar who had "idears" about "Cubar". He was said to have remarked shortly before he came down to Texas in the introduction to his address at a New England college, that it was nice to be back in New England where people didn't think his dialect was strange. And now, of course, you know all about the speech of our present President. I suspect that it has been influenced through the years by his experiences in Washington and elsewhere, but it still has, what I am sure is a Texas flavor. We do not all speak alike. My North Midland speech is different from your speech and among you there may be many slight variations in ways of saying things.

But we speakers of English write the language identically regardless of our dialect. It is an interesting characteristic of language that the written form of it is much more stable, much more regular than the spoken form of it. I've always remembered the newspaper quotation from an English scholar who was visiting in this country who said, "You Americans use the spoken English more vividly and colorfully than any other speakers of English. But," he said, "your writing is deadly." If it is, we need to ask ourselves then what do we do with this vivid, colorful language when we write it that makes it different from our speech.

Not only is English widely used around the world in countries where it is mother language but it has become the second language of vast numbers of the world's people. In fact, it's interesting to talk with foreign students on any campus. They will tell you invariably that though there may be other languages offered in their colleges and their high schools, English is frequently the favored language around the world. In fact, the linguists are telling us it comes closer today to being a world language than any other language has ever been in the history of man.

Have you told your children these things? Wouldn't they be interested in knowing that this language that we grind them through and teach them rules for using, is a vivid, living, interesting thing, that it is of interest to vast numbers of people; that one *could* get along, because some people do, in some parts of the world where they're learning English for the first time with a vocabulary of about 800 words. Then contrast that with the big, new *Webster International Dictionary*. Call the children's attention to the fact that the vast number of words in that dictionary are spelled with only 26 letters. We can do amazing things with language both orally and in writing. We so often forget to tell children all these things which would make their language much more interesting, much more vital to them.

Have you looked with children at what language is doing in solving the world's problems? Look at what has happened just very recently. Our President returned only a few days ago from his trip to Southeast Asia to talk with people. Indira Ghandi had no sooner taken office in India than she wanted to come to the United States to talk with our President. The President of the Philippines has just been here and Wilson from England comes over periodically. Why? Because we are doing so much of the work of the world today through oral language, speaking and listening. Speaking and listening are more important today than at almost anytime in man's history. And the more we can do, of course, with solving the world's problems through speaking and listening, the less apt we are to try to solve the world's problems through chemicals and metals which destroy people. Let's talk with our children about these things so that they will understand the significance of learning to speak well, to listen well, to discipline their listening, their speaking, their thinking.

It has been my privilege in the last two years to help with surveys in various places. The one that was most extensive was one in Evanston, Illinois, in which I was responsible for studying English programs in the elementary schools while Dwight Burton from Florida did junior high schools and J. N. Hook from Illinois did the senior high schools. After visiitng 200 elementary schools' classrooms, in my report to the Board of Education, an oral report, the one point that I brought out most forcefully is the fact that most elementary teachers have little notion, *very* little notion, of how little they hear of children's talk in the course of a week, a month. How much do you know about the talk of each child in your class? Very little I suspect in regard to some of them. And yet when we write, we write language; when we read, we read language. So often we forget that the basis of all this is the child's own language, what he brings to school.

No matter where a child lives on the surface of the earth, if he is a normal child he tends to master the sound system of his language by about the age of three or four. He is using the same sounds that the adults around him are using. He masters the grammar of that language, we are told, by about the age of eight. I love to watch the faces of high school teachers when I say that a child knows his grammar when he comes to school, because what they mean by grammar and what I mean are not quite the same thing. After all, a child by the age of eight is stringing words together just the way the people in his environment are doing it. If you doubt that they have learned their grammar just remind yourself how difficult it is to make any changes in their patterns of usage. If a child has learned to use the "Me and him ain't got none," kind of English, you do not change it easily because what he has learned, he has learned so thoroughly. The people from whom the child learned that language are the people who feed him, and clothe him, and take care of him; the people in whom his security is centered. One doesn't easily lay aside his relationship with those people just because the school says, "I don't care if your father and mother do say it that way; it's wrong."

Now if we want children to care about language and to get at the task of improving their own language, we have then to look at the problems in terms of the child's feelings, his attitude, the way he looks at things, because, after all, the language a child has mastered when he comes to school is associated with the people who mean most to him. But we have learned in recent years what we probably have known always: if we want to motivate children to improve their language, we do not criticize what they bring. Instead, we wholeheartedly and honestly accept it and then build from there.

The studies that Loban has been carrying on in California, are perhaps

the most valuable studies that have ever been made of children's language. As you remember, he began fourteen years ago to record the speech of 338 children in kindergarten, children of all the sorts of ethnic background represented in the schools of Oakland, California: many children from the various parts of the deep south with Negro speech, wide varieties of it; children from the Orient; children from the islands of the Pacific; children from Mexican-Spanish background. His 338 kindergarten children covered a wide social and economic ethnic range. He followed those children, all he could possibly find of them for 13 years, and recorded their speech from kindergarten through the twelfth grade and, amazingly, came out with 220 of his original sample in the end. We at Indiana University have studied intensively the language of about 600 elementary school children — first grade through sixth grade, and we have also looked at some speech of four and five year olds. Bernstein in London has been studying the speech of Cockney speaking children in the slums of London. Hunt in Florida has been studying the written language of children. We are all coming out with some similar generalizations. We are all saying that these children use all kinds of sentences, all the kinds of sentences you and I use with one exception and I'll talk about that this afternoon.

We are all in agreement that the best measure we know of the maturity of a child's language is his ability to expand and elaborate sentences. Bernstein says of the Cockney-speaking children in London just what we are saying over here, that the child who uses a language poorly is using only a small portion of the potential of the language. He perhaps comes from a home in which no one has helped him learn how to use language, to think with it, no one has guided the child through language. Some of you may remember reading in one of the Harvard bulletins some time back a study by Brown and Bellugi in which they told what mothers do in teaching language to children. These were mothers who were interested in children's language, who helped the children in a great many ways. The little child who is learning to talk may look out of the window and say "Red car!" Mother may say, "Yes, there is a red car, and here is a blue car, and there is a black truck." Or the child says "David's shoes!" and mother says, "Yes, those are David's shoes. Come we'll put them on, one shoe on this foot, one shoe on that foot." The child says, "Write here?" Mother says, "No, don't write on the wall, come over here and write on this paper." Now, what is mother doing? The child is doing something which psychologically is a perfectly natural thing. You see, when we speak English, (and the linguists are calling our attention to this periodically), meaning is not carried only by words, it is also carried by the way in which we use our voices. As I speak to you now, I am not pitching all my words at the same height, nor stressing them equally, and at times I pause so that I clot together some words, and then separate them by a fraction of a second of a pause from other words which follow. That is a part of the pattern of English speech. Pitch, stress, and pauses help us with recognizing meaning as we listen. And so the little child picks out first of all the words that are the meaning bearing words, the ones that we pitch a little higher and emphasize a little more clearly. So he says "Red car!" and mother says, "Yes, there is a red car." She adds the other parts of speech and bit by bit the child learns them. We have some children in school who need the same kind of help, need just to have their fragments of sentences picked up, elaborated, expanded so that all the words that are necessary in what we call complete sentencs are put in. And bit by bit the child's ear is tuned to them and he begins to use them all. Loban is saying not to worry in the early years about usage, not to begin

to nag at children to say this instead of that. Instead, teach children to think with language.

You know how differently language is used in different homes. It isn't always based on cultural or socio-economic differences — it is based on parental attitudes more than anything else. One mother, if she wants her child to settle down and play quietly because grandmother isn't feeling well, may say to the child, "Grandmother isn't feeling well, so if you want to play a noisy game, go out to the back yard, or go across the street to the playground. But when you're in the house let's find quiet things to do so that we'll not disturb grandmother." But not all mothers do that. Some mothers may just shout, "Quiet!", or "Shut up," or "Get out with your noise," and do not teach children the why's of things, do not help children reason with language, and think with it. We have that task to do in school for some children. And sadly often, we don't do much of it. We just give orders, we just cite prohibitions, but we do not teach children to think with language.

Now if it's true, as those of us who have been studying children's languages seems to be agreeing, that the best measure of the maturity of a child's language is his ability to expand and elaborate sentences, then you must help him learn to do it, you must teach him how to do it. The linguists are telling us that there are only three basic kinds of sentences: the kind of sentence which has a transitive verb, such a sentence as "John bought the cake."; and the kind of sentence that has an intransitive verb, "He walked home"; and the type of sentence which has a linking verb, "The cake was good," or "It tasted good." Those are the basic kinds of English sentences and the rest of our sentences are expansions, elaborations, modifications of those basic patterns. Boiled down to its very lowest denominator, that is what Noam Chomsky is saying at MIT when he talks about transformational grammar. Sentences in English are basically simple; there are only three types. All the rest of the sentences that we can generate, that we can concoct, the kinds of transformations we make — are based on those three simple patterns.

We sometimes get off the track as we look at linguistics, and for two reasons. One, the linguists are still talking mainly to each other. They are writing on the level on which they and their colleagues want to operate, and much of what they say is not easy reading for us. They have developed new terminology, though the more I study it, the more convinced I become that we can do everything we need to do without their new terminology. We can use the words we have been using all along and still do what we need to do with helping boys and girls understand the structure of their language. We can start calling attention to some of the sentences which children themselves use, not the sentences we read out of the language textbooks, but sentences that come white-hot out of the mouths of the children. Those mean something to a child because they carry meaning that he was interested in expressing. After we've reacted to his meaning then we can say, "Let's take that sentence that Mary used and let's see what we can do with it." And perhaps we boil it down to the pattern which may be one of the three kinds that Chomsky mentioned—a sentence with a transitive verb, or one with an intransitive verb, or one with a linking verb. And we say that it is like a frame, a picture frame. But one can take out the picture from a frame and put another picture in. Now let's see what other words we can put into this frame. What other sentences we can build by just adding new words to the patterns. And so, instead of saying, "The boy bought the cake," we say, "Mother baked a cake," or "Daddy bought a pair of shoes." We add a great variety of words to the frame so that the children

can see how flexibly they can handle that frame. And perhaps as we do it we might says, "Yes, we could use the verb *went* there, couldn't we? What other verb could we use instead of went?" And here is a point which I think is extremely important for us. Let me explain.

When I was ready to start the study which was eventually published, "What Linguistics has to Offer for Us in the Elementary School," I gathered five famous linguists to help set up the scheme, the pattern for the study. One was from Brown University, one from Harvard, one from California, and in preparation for that I had a graduate student — Dr. Robert Ruddell who now teaches at Berkley — line up on big white charts all the grammar in four sets of language textbooks that are widely used in the United States. He charted the point at which a term such as *sentence, phrase, clause, verb,* or *noun* first appears in the series of books, where it is defined, and what the follow-up of teaching is. Later, when we put those charts on easels around our conference room the linguists looked at them and said, "Why do you make grammar so difficult for children? It doesn't need to be. Why do you ever use definitions in the elementary school? They only make trouble." Now stop to think with me a minute on that. In one or two books in which the authors have dodged some of the technical vocabulary, they call a *verb* an "action word", and later on—a year or so later—they call it a verb. But the children I know who are talking about supersonic flight are using vocabulary far more difficult than the word *verb*. And they like to know the real names of things. Besides, if you call it an action word you can be perfectly sure some child is going to pop up and say, "Well, then *baseball* is a verb, isn't it?" After all, what is more active than that? We get children off the track with definitions, with our abstractions.

After all when you look at what children already know, it is clear that they do not need definitions. When a mother says to her toddler, "Hurry up and get your pajamas on and I'll have time to tell you a story," she doesn't define the word *story*. And when she some evening says, "Let's read some poems from this book tonight," she doesn't give him a definition of the word *poem*. But when the evening comes when she says, "Which shall I read tonight, some poems from this book or some stories from this book?," the child knows what she's talking about. He has a vocabulary of something like 3,000 words when he comes to kindergarten. But if you ask him for definitions you know what you will get. Probably just the sort of thing that Ruth Krauss has given in her book, "A Hole Is to Dig." You ask a little child, "What's an orange?" "Why it's to eat, I had one for breakfast." My favorite definition in that book by the way, is the one of the *principal.* A child says, "A principal is to take out slivers." I always hope that a child's concept of the principal is as constructive as that. But, at any rate, children don't need definitions, the linguists say. But they do need to know how words operate.

We say to a youngster, "The word *went* in that sentence, 'The boy went down the street,' doesn't paint a very clear picture, does it? How big a boy? How did he go? What other verb could be used?" And we try *skipped* which suggests a little boy or *sauntered* or *strolled,* and we say, "That paints the picture more clearly, doesn't it?" Or children are overusing adjectives *big, little,* and we say, "What else could we say? What other adjectives could we use that would paint the picture more clearly?" And children catch on to what we mean by verb, adjective, noun. And then, the linguists are saying, when they get to junior high school or somewhere up the line a teacher can say, "Now in the light of what you know about nouns, what do you think a noun is?" and let children work out inductively

their own definition. That makes a good deal of sense. But in the meantime, we've been showing children how words operate, what the function of each of them is in the sentence, and we can use our terminology from the field of grammar. We do not need a lot of new terminology; we can use what we have, and the children will be ready for what they need later on in terminology in high school and college. Meanwhile they will have a pretty clear concept as far as they have gone of what the parts of speech are, what purpose each serves in a sentence.

Not only did the linguists say leave out definitions, but they said always work in terms of function and use. Take children's sentences and show children how to do things with them. By and by we come to the point where we say to children, "Yes, the subject of a sentence can be *John,* but if you've already talked about him, it can be *he* because we don't say, 'John ate John's dinner.' We say,' John ate his dinner,' " or a subject need not be just a word. A child one day said, "My big brother, John, who just returned from service is only going to be here a few days went with me to the party last night." And the teacher said, "Wasn't that a long subject, did you notice? 'My big brother, John, who just returned from service and is only going to be here a few days, was all the subject. Subjects can be quite different." Children can begin to recognize quite clearly that the building of sentences can be done in many ways, that the English language is a very flexible language. One can do all sorts of things with it. The more they build new sentences out of the ones that they have been using, build them within Chomsky's form patterns, the more clearly they understand how we string words together in English to make good sentences.

In the meantime, if we are following Loban's suggestion, we are seeing to it that there is a good deal of time for talk in school. The teacher's questions are not just *what* questions, "What does the book say? What are the facts? But instead the teacher will say very frequently, "If this is true, then what? Suppose this were true, then what would be the case?" so that children learn to distinguish cause and effect, how one thing effects another, to reason from one point to another, to *think* with language. Many of them have never been taught at home to think with language. They need a great deal of help with it. We help them first of all — at least Loban is suggesting this — to expand their language, to learn to use it in a great variety of ways, for many new purposes, to feel some power in the handling of language. Then Loban suggests that, later on, we help the children who come to school using language which deviates from what we've come to call informal standard English — the kind we try to teach in the elementary school — we begin to talk with those children about the need for standard language.

I said earlier, that we have a good many dialects in this country. There is the kind that is used by the Spanish speaking child. One of my doctoral candidates has just finished recording masses of speech from Puerto Rican children in some schools in Chicago, children who come to first grade with no English and have to learn English at school. As they get started, one of the errors you find them making is leaving out the pronoun that is needed in a sentence in which the child is asked "Where do you live?" The child is apt to say, "Live in Chicago." Why? Because in Spanish the pronoun is inherent in the verb, and the child is carrying over into English a principle that operates in his own language. Or if you teach in Pennsylvania Dutch country, you find children utilizing a pattern which stems from the Old German. A child may say, "My off is all," meaning "My vacation has ended," or he turns a sentence around "Pa threw the cow over the fence some hay" giving a Germanic twist to the sentence. Likewise, the little

Negro child says, "Him a good dog; he go he house." Martin Joos would say of that child, that we must not become mired immediately in the problems of usage because the child is following accurately almost every grammatical rule that operates in those sentences. To be sure, when he says, "Him a good dog," he has — and many children seem to have — no third person singular in their speech, but they are using the correct verb. The first and last words you know are correct for the purpose and he has the proper word but the wrong form of it in the other two slots. We're being told over and over again DON'T BECOME OVERCONCERNED ABOUT THE ERRORS. Notice that most of what the child is saying is correct and get at the task of tuning his ear to the parts that you want to add or change. We know that we have to do that with little children who come to kindergarten or first grade, some even from the best language backgrounds.

I remember a child who came to my kindergarten, saying, "Look what I brang you. I runned and runned so I wouldn't be late." What was the little child doing? He was being a little more logical with English verbs than the language permits him to be. After all if you say, *sing-sang, ring-rang,* why don't you say *bring-brang?* You just don't. Or if you say *walk-walked,* why don't you say *run-runned?* You just don't. And so the teacher of such a child says, "I'm glad you brought that. You're always bringing things to help us, aren't you? You brought something the other day for our social studies work. And I'm glad you ran too, because I'd hate to have you coming in late." And so, by and by, the child is saying, "I brought you something and I ran." Or if he isn't, we call his attention to the fact we usually say *brought* —"I brought it and I ran" and they say it by and by. We can do the same with the children who speak sub-standard English. We can tune their ears to the correct form.

I happened to be in Washington, D.C. just about a year ago working for a day with the teachers who are teaching in the inner-city schools which have become entirely populated by Negro children who have brought their own dialect from various parts of the South. The teachers were very excited that day because some equipment they had ordered under NDEA had just arrived. They were going to set up in every school, grades 1 through 3, what they called a listening table with a tape recorder in the middle of it and six or eight sets of head phones around. Thus, the children, instead of filling in blanks in workbooks, which is frequently less than valuable — considerably less — could sit around a table and listen, listen to stories beautifully told, to poetry beautifully read, to some bits of material that perhaps the teacher has recorded to expand what they're talking about in social studies or science, or just some good conversation, for ear tuning. When a child comes to school, the linguists keep reminding us, he has some well developed language learning techniques. How do you know? He has just learned a language. He can talk it. He demonstrates for you, day by day, that he has learned this language. Yet what do we do frequently? Sit him down, give him a book and a pencil and leave out the language learning techniques that he has so well developed, the listening, copying, speaking aspect.

If we want children to learn to use language more maturely, we help them learn how to expand and elaborate sentences. We do it over and over again. We stop after we've talked about whatever it is that is our interest at the moment and say, "Let's take that sentence Mary used a few minutes ago. Let's see what we can do with it." We can expand it in a variety of ways. Perhaps we say, "How would we say that if we were asking a question?" We can transform it, to use Chomsky's term, from a statement into a question. How do we do it? We have to change the structure a bit. In-

stead of saying, "The boy bought the cake" "The cake was bought by the boy." If we change it from an active to a passive sentence, we have to put the object into the subject's place and add a helping auxiliary to the verb. Or if we turn the sentence into a question, "Did John buy the cake?" we have to add a helping verb and change the sentence around. We help children to see how language operates, how one manipulates it, and the more they do of it, the more accurately they handle sentences.

We have a tremendous asset for our teaching in the fact that children love language. We know that is true if we listen to them. Every four-year-old child you've ever known can wear out anybody in the course of a day with the questions he asks. Every six-year-old child takes hold of every new word that comes his way, tries it in every possible combination, and looks to see if you notice. And what about our middle-grade children? They love all the new words that are being coined in English and use them constantly. And what about the high school youngsters? They latch onto every bit of new slang that comes their way and invent some more.

What is some of the knowledge about language that we can pass on to our children? What are the linguists telling us about language that will be helpful for our children? Point number one, I think, is that language is something we *learn*. People around the world have developed different languages and each child learns the language he hears. Having learned one language he can learn others. Also a language has a sound system. We have in our language a sound that is not in Japanese, the sound of L. We do not have in our language the umlaut sound that appears in a good many German words. Different languages have different sounds at various points. But every language has a sound structure. Also, every language is an arbitrary thing. You can illustrate that in a good many ways. A stock illustration is something that happens in almost any classroom — a dog comes wandering in and after the children have expressed their excitement and interest in it the teacher may say, "Isn't it interesting. We call him a dog, don't we, because we speak English. If we were talking Spanish we would call him 'el perro.' If we were talking German, we would call him 'Der Hund.' If we were talking French, we would call him 'le chien.' But it's the same old dog. Different words, different sounds are being used to talk about him. Languages are like that." In addition to a sound system, each language has a grammatical system. Words in a list do not carry meaning; they have to be put together in sentences, in patterns, to carry meaning. Everybody who knows the language knows what you mean when you weave your words together in patterns. We can understand each other because we use similiar patterns.

Also, we can show our children how language changes. We can start in kindergarten with the Mother Goose rhymes because they have in them some words that have become obsolete in day by day English. We can call their attention to change when we read to our fifth grade children, as I hope we do, Howard Pyles' *Robin Hood* and show them how language operated back at that time which was about the time of Miles Standish and John Alden.

I watched a teacher in a fifth grade in Lincoln, Nebraska, where they're carrying on a study of literature as a springboard for children's writing, work with this idea and reinforce it with children. She had finished reading Howard Pyle's *Robin Hood* and had copied off on a ditto sheet some of the sentences from the story. As she handed the pages out to the children she said, "I thought it would be fun this morning to translate some of these into modern English." And the one I happen to remember was, "Prithee,

sir, whither goest thou?" The teacher asked, "What would you say? One boy said, "Well, if I saw my pal on the street I'd say, 'Hi, where you going?' " The teacher answered, "Perfectly good for one purpose, isn't it? That is good modern English. Would you always say it that way?" By and by another boy said he didn't think so. He guessed if one were being very proper and talking to someone very important he might even say "Mr. Brown, would you mind my asking where you're going?" The teacher said, "Both are good English aren't they, for different purposes."

Likewise, we can show children what is being added to English. Set aside a space where you jot down this year every word that you and the children can bring in that is just as new to you as it is to the children. You you did not learn how to spell *supersonic* when you were in the grades. You did not learn how to spell *aquanaut* or *cosmonaut*. You did not learn to spell many words you now know quite well because they did not exist. We are coining new words *constantly* in English, to meet new needs, to take care of new experiences. So we say to children, "Take note of what is being added to English; take note of what is being done to change meaning." If you ask any five-year-old today what a capsule is, he won't say what I would have said when I was five. There's a new meaning for an old word.

Some of the principles the linguist would like to have us get across to children in regard to language are that language is man-made, that language changes as things happen to people, that each language has an arbitrary sound system, that each language has an arbitrary grammatical system. We string words together in patterns. Part of our meaning is carried by our voices, the way we say things. If I say, "What are you doing?" that means I'm casually interested in what you're doing. But if I say, *What* are you doing?!" my silent language of gesture and facial expressions as well as my voice tells you this is a very different question. Also, we are adding new words to English, we are dropping old words, we are changing the meaning of words. Nouns are becoming verbs, verbs are becoming adjectives. The purist doesn't always like it, but it's always happening and he can't stop it. So we say to children LANGUAGE IS A LIVING THING. We live with it day by day; it is one of our most important tools; therefore, let's learn to use it well.

Again going back to Loban, we spend a long time with our younger children teaching them to think with language, to expand their sentences, to use their language — not the teacher's language but their own, and use it better. Then, at about fifth grade, we can say to children, "Look around the world and see how different people use English. Listen to some of the newscasters on television, some of the good ones, Cronkite, Huntley and Brinkley, these people have been tested out to make sure they can use what in the industry has come to be called 'network English', English that is clear, correct and with no distinct regional flavor. Listen to your minister, listen to your doctor, note the kinds of English that have to be used in certain kinds of jobs. Now let's add that kind. That kind of English will take you anywhere you want to go, anywhere in the world where there are people who speak English." Also tell the children that language can open doors and language can close doors. "Your language which you have learned so well, may be a kind that does everything you need it to do right here where you live. But look around to see what else you need, if you're going to go into other kinds of work, or going somewhere else. Let's add this language. You've mastered your own language. You don't need to practice it at school. Let's practice what you want to add." That means something to boys and girls and they'll go to work on it and will do it well.

READING AND LINGUISTICS

Dr. Ruth Strickland

The world is looking at reading, and is deeply concerned about it. The newly emerging countries — the countries we call the underdeveloped countries—are very aware that if they hope to achieve a place in the twentieth century world they must learn to read. After all, it was not until man began to put down his ideas, to capture them in symbols which he devised for the purpose, that he could pass on to the next generation what he had learned.

Now, it seems to me that we could do a good deal for our boys and girls by calling their attention periodically to the fact that the purpose of reading is to make available to people this accumulated knowledge. We get so busy grinding through the job we think is ours to do, that we forget to tell children why we're doing it, what it's for, what the values are. Because after all, no matter whether a child may choose to become a physicist, a teacher, a minister, or work in industry, whatever job he goes into nowadays, he must find out what has gone on before. He must find out where matters stand, and then, of course, through reading, through learning what others have learned, stand on their shoulders and reach out and upward from there. I think our boys and girls need some inspiration to help them understand why we give so much time, so much attention to the teaching of reading.

We have been criticized considerably in recent years for our teaching of reading. We know what has happened since Sputnik. We trace some of our concern for reading to the book which was published a number of years ago by Rudolph Flesch who told us that Johnny couldn't read. As a result, we who teach reading began to look at what we were doing a little more critically. It seems to me while we did not like that book (and I still do not), nevertheless, it did two things for us: it called our attention to the fact that we had not interpreted to the public, to the parents what we actually are doing, and, also, that we had become too complacent, too satisfied with *what* we were doing and needed to reevaluate it. Now, we know that the people who have since written and talked about our teaching of reading are quite right when they say that we are teaching reading at least as well as ever before and probably better, but the fact remains that we are still not doing as well as we would like to do. We know that there are too many children who have the potential for learning who are not learning to read, that there are too many getting into high schools and dropping out because they can't read. We know that there are too many children who lack the language background for reading and therefore are having difficulty. So we have a lot of work yet to do.

Right now, there are many people who are quite determined to get into the act with us and do something about reading. We're not all pleased with all that these people are saying. For instance, a little book by Edward Hall called *The Silent Language* tells of some of the problems of our ambassadors, our workers, as they go round the world, who fail to fit into the cultures into which they go, because they don't understand the people. They don't understand the thinking that underlies the language and the culture of the people to whom they have gone. And, therefore, they do things that, in the light of those cultures, are absurd or perhaps things at which these people take offense simply because they do not understand. Among other things,

Edward Hall is talking about reading and he says, "Our current approach to the teaching of reading is one of many obvious defects in American pedagogy."

The evidence that something is wrong with our way of teaching is clear. Instead of rewarding the child for learning, the process of learning often becomes for him painful, difficult and unrewarding. So we must ask ourselves what we do when we teach reading that does make the process for some children painful and difficult. We need to ask ourselves over and over and over again, "What *is* this process that we call reading? How does it operate?"

From the time I began to be interested in being a teacher on down to the present time, I found teachers and teacher training institutions telling teachers that reading is a process of gaining meaning from the symbols that are written down on the page or wherever. The linguist offers a different definition as he looks at reading. He says the process of reading is one thing and one thing only, and that is turning the stimulus of the marks into speech and thence into meaning. And you remember some of what we took offense at in Rudolph Flesch's book says exactly that. It seems that when he was growing up in Vienna, where he lived until Hitler's legions moved into Austria, he had occasion to take in high school for one semester, a course in the Czech language. After he came to America, he happened to be visiting a Czech friend when he saw on the man's desk a newspaper in the Czech language. Flesch says he picked it up and read a few sentences from it and the friend said, "Why, I didn't know you knew Czech." Flesch answered, "I don't understand a word of it, I can just read it."

Now, we don't like that definition of reading and we don't approve of it because we know our task is far more than just teaching children to decipher the marks on the page. But the linguists, such as John Carroll of Harvard say, "You people tie too much into your definition of reading; actually a large part of what you're trying to do that you call teaching is teaching children to think with reading." And of course that *is* our task. Whether you call it reading, or whether you call it thinking, that is the job, in any case.

Let's ask ourselves, then, how reading operates. You've read this; I've repeated it many times, but let's review it anyway. When one reads, of course, he *is* recognizing the marks on the page, and turning them back into sound. Whether he is saying it aloud or doing it within his mind, it is turned back into speech. Therefore, one part of the task that we are carrying on when we read is recognizing the marks. Now, we do the same sort of thing as we listen. As I am talking now, I am talking to you in perfectly common ordinary English speech symbols. You have no difficulty recognizing my speech symbols because I am not using difficult erudite language; I am talking very simply and you've used all these words since you were a tiny child and you have no difficulty recognizing them. But, the linguist says, the meaning is not in my words, the meaning is in your mind. And when we stop to think of that, it *has* to be true. If it were not, then you would be able to understand any language that anybody might speak to you — if you could hear it. The meaning is not in words, the meaning is not in the marks, the meaning is in the mind of the person who interprets the sounds or the marks. We know that some of our youngsters who are up in high school, occasionally some in college, find interpreting, putting meaning into some of the marks they read quite difficult because they lack the background for the doing of it. Two things that I've mentioned that you do as you read you are doing now as you listen to me: you're recognizing symbols, you are putttng meaning into them. You're also reacting on the basis of *your* experience. Not mine,

not anybody else's in the world, just yours. Well, let's see how that operates as we look at material and listen to it.

I remember a little boy in the first grade I was teaching whose reading skill was far beyond that of the other children. I had encouraged George to prepare a story and read it to the children and he was doing it beautifully when he came to the word "spring." He stood there looking at it and finally I said, "George, you know that word." "Yes," said George, "spring," and he stood some more. Finally I said, rather impatiently, "Well, go on reading." George did, and it was a long time afterward that it occured to me what the problem was. George undoubtedly knew the word "spring" when it meant the season in which mother puts away the winter clothes, and gets out the clothes for warmer weather. He perhaps knew the word spring when dad said, "Stop jumping up and down on the davenport, you are going to break the spring." He may have known the word spring when it meant to leap up, but he didn't know the word spring when it meant water bubbling up out of the ground in the country. And he could not bring that meaning to the material. His life's experience had never given it to him. And of course children can't reach up into the ether and pull in meanings — they have to encounter them some way.

It is through experience that they learn the meanings of words. I keep reminding Head Start teachers nowadays who spend a good bit of time trying to enrich children's vocabulary of words and meanings through all kinds of experience, that experience and talk must go together. After all, you can take a child who has never seen a farm, turn him loose on a farm for a whole day, let him wander around, see everything. But if there is no one there to say, "This is a silo, this is what you put in it, this is what it's for; you call this land pasture, and here is a fence around it, and this is what it's for; here is a barn, and here is a milking machine, and here is a tractor," the child would spend the day happily, perhaps, on the farm — but come home with not a single new word if there were not someone there to combine talk with experience. Talk and experience go together. And we must have them together because, after all, if a child is to bring meaning to material on a page, there must be the meaning within him, within himself.

We intermediate grade teachers need to watch that carefully because so often, as children get into the reading of materials in the field of geography, history, science, here are old words with new meanings. In the case of a word like "plain," a child knows two or three meanings, but he has none to bring to the sentence that tells about the Appalachian Plain or the Salisbury Plain in England when the word means now a form of terrain. The only experience you or I or anyone else can bring to readi[illegible] is the experience that our lives have given us. I quote so often from Thomas Mann, a famous German novelist, who wrote a novel in which he embroidered and expanded the Biblical story of Joseph in Egypt. If you have read it you remember he has Joseph saying to the young Ishmaelite who is taking him down into captivity in Egypt, "There is a universe of which I am the center." And the young Ishmaelite goes to his father and says, "That Jew thinks he's the lord of all creation." But what was the philosopher Mann saying to us? Just what I'm saying now — there's a universe of which *I* am the center and no one else is. There's a universe of which *you* are the center and no one else can be the center of *your* universe. Each of us can only see with his own eyes, can only hear with his own ears, can only bring his own experience to bear on what he hears and what he reads; that is all we have. That is what we have to use. Then we have, of course, the everlasting task, a life-time task

of expanding and enlarging that experience—so that we can bring increasing rich and valuable meaning to what we hear—and what we read.

So I've said three things so far: As you listen, or as you read, you recognize the symbols, you put meaning into them, you react to them on the basis of your experience. And if, when you go home today and someone says, "What did that woman say?" you won't all say the same things, will you? Each of you will respond in terms of what meant something to you, and you'll forget and not mention the rest of it. But if someone else happens along and says, "Yes, I remember she said this, too," you may say, "Well, so she did. I'd forgotten that for a moment." Now what do we remember? We remember what means most to us and what doesn't, we forget, we lay aside. We don't integrate into ourselves material which means nothing to us. Or, if we do, perhaps for test purposes, we forget it very quickly afterward.

Now, to go back to something else I said this mornng in talking of language and linguistics. A speaker of English helps a listener by pitching a little higher the key meaning-bearing words in a sentence, stressing them a little more vigorously, and cutting off some portions of what is said from other portions by very brief pauses. That is characteristic of English—but not of all other languages. Notice how I said that sentence? I pitched a little higher "characteristic"—"English" and separated that by a fragment of pause from the portion of the sentence which followed. A speaker of English helps the listener to find the meaning-bearing words. It isn't quite true in the same sense for all languages. Japanese clicks along on dead level. I decided Greek did too—modern Greek—when I heard a great deal of it a couple of years ago. But in English we handle our voices in such manner that the key words stand out clearly. Now, when a child or an adult is reading material that is printed on a page, he does not have that help. The words which are the key words are *not* underlined. They are *not* blacker and larger than the others. They are just like the other words, and the individual doing the reading must find the keywords—he must recognize them—he must know how to put what he is reading into perspective. In any English sentence some of the words are just indicators or glue—call them determiners or what else you want to, depending on how much of the language of the linguist you want to borrow, to assimilate. At any rate, the reader must do all of this putting material into perspective himself. He does not have the kind of help that a speaker provides in his use of pitch, stress, and juncture, or pauses in his talk.

So learning to read and learning to turn the symbols and marks into meaning with which to think is a difficult process. That is why, of course, it comes along considerably after children have learned to talk because the whole task of the primary grades quite literally is helping children to learn to read words that they have been talking for quite some time. Horace Mann spoke of that years ago, 1837 to be exact, in his report to the Massachusetts Board of Education at the end of one of his years as their Commissioner of Education. He said children come to school knowing words by ear, tongue and mind. The only way they don't know them is by eye and bit by bit you help them to learn to recognize those same well-known words by eye and to respond to them as they find them on paper.

Of course, the material on the page is a little different in other ways from the material that you hear as you listen. After all, a speaker has some opportunities that a writer does not have. In our research, in which we recorded masses of speech of more than 600 children, we found that a good many children use what we came to call "mazes." A child would start a sentence with, "uh, well, um, uh," and would stop in the middle of it with

some more of that or he would do what you and I frequently do when we talk—we start to say something and then say, "no, um," and we change the direction of our sentences. We edit a bit as we go along. But one can't do that in writing. One reason why writing is more difficult for children than talking is that in writing one must come to terms with the sentence before he can put it down. I suppose it's because the little 7-year-old has such difficulty with that as he writes that Arnold Gesell in his book *The Child From Five* to *Ten* calls the 7-year-old age the eraser age. Remember that? The youngster gets nicely started writing a sentence, "Uh-uh, can't spell that word; don't know what to do; erase it. Start over again." At any rate, in speaking we do stop; we pause occasionally, and change our direction; we substitute a word for the one that we thought we were going to use. We can edit as we go along in speech, but one cannot do that in writing. Writing must be clear. The sentences must be put down so that there are no mazes in them and they move straight through from beginning to end. Though in reading, the material a child is to respond to is there before his eyes, many children find reading difficult because they do not talk the kinds of sentences they find in books.

Studies coming out of England as well as our own studies indicate that there is considerable relationship between the language the child talks, his skill in using language, and the ease with which he learns to read. That's one reason why it always distresses me to see school systems which have problems because there are children in the schools who cannot read, going out to hire more remedial teachers who gather the children together either separately or in groups—and start right in with teaching reading without ever finding out what children can do with language. It stands to reason that, if a child talks a dialect that is very different from the material in the book, he is *going* to have difficulty in learning to read. He couldn't help but have difficulty. The little child who uses fragments of sentences is not going to be able to read and put the material on the page into flowing sentences. The child or adult who doesn't understand how we handle pitch, stress, and pauses may read orally and do it badly. Listen, the next time you hear an adult read orally—reading which you consider not good oral reading, whether it's the secretary reading the minutes of the club meeting, the minister reading the passage from scripture, a mother reading to her child, or occasionally a teacher reading poetry to children in school. We don't all read orally as well as we ought to. But, if you do hear poor reading, ask yourself, "What makes it poor?" It isn't always that the individual cannot decipher the words; frequently he knows all the words perfectly. The problem is, he is not putting the material back into flowing English speech, he is not pushing up the peaks of meaning, of pitch and stress. He does not clot together the words that belong together and separate them a little bit from the words which follow so you can put the material into perspective in your mind. Reading is more difficult than is listening and the ability to do good reading requires ability to use language.

The first step then, in teaching an individual to read is to find what he can do with language. What are his sentences like? How does he handle words? What patterns does he use easily? And are they like those he's going to find in the book? Now, interestingly enough, in the mass of speech which we recorded at Indiana University from our 600 plus children, we found the children using practically all kinds of sentences except one, and that was the kind that we find in the pre-primer. You know, those little choppy bits—they aren't even good English. People don't talk that way. I have often wondered whether, if we could find a way to teach reading us-

ing sentences that are more nearly the kind people talk, it might be easier for children to learn to read. At any rate, we need to know what they can do with language.

Now there are many schemes being tried around the country for the improvement of reading. I said a moment ago that a good many people want to get into the act to help us, to have some part in improving the teaching of reading. About four years ago, I had a telephone call from Washington asking whether we could stage at Indiana University a conference on reading which was to be financed by the government but set up by the Center for Applied Linguistics in Washington, D.C., one of the big branches of the Modern Language Association. When the guest list was sent from Washington we found that the guests for this conference were psychologists and linguists who were to talk about the teaching of reading. These scholars are determined at the present time that they have some ideas that we ought to be using. Some of their ideas I think we must look at. It makes sense to look at them. In the first place, the linguist has done far more study of language than you or I have ever had time to do or have the background for doing. They are saying over and over again that we must keep remembering as we teach reading of English that English is a language written with an alphabet and because it's written with an alphabet, that fact in itself must influence the way in which we teach reading. As you go back to some of the very earliest reading material used in the United States you realize that this is not a new idea. The little Horn Book which I have and the New England primer were based on this idea. And now the linguists are saying that it makes a great deal of sense to show children that English is written with an alphabet. In fact, it is interesting to children to realize how many words we can write with just 26 letters. The whole great unabridged dictionary is written with just 26 letters. If you want to help children crack the code of English reading, then you must see to it very early, that they know the letters. They need not know them in sequences; they'll need that for dictionary work and for alphabetizing later; but they need to know that this is an *m*, and that's an *a*, and this is a *y*, and so on.

A few years ago, 1935 to be exact, a famous linguist, Leonard Bloomfield, wrote an article on the teaching of reading which appeared in *Elementary English Review*. In it he called attention to his conviction that the first step in teaching reading should be teaching children to recognize the letters. Now, picking up his ideas, we have two people doing some rather intensive work with them. Some of you have seen the new SRA material which is built on Bloomfield's ideas. (Bloomfield died a few years ago, but Barnhart whose dictionaries we use in the grades of the elementary school has picked up Bloomfield's ideas and working at Miquon School with Rasmussen and others has created some reading material that SRA is getting out.) It starts with learning to recognize the letters, then goes on to the reading of words built on the simplest and most regular spelling pattern in English. You all know what that pattern is — the consonant - vowel - consonant pattern, as you find it in such words as *cut, pin, hat*. One could fill an enormous chalk board with words that follow that pattern of spelling exactly. Or if you are a sixth grade teacher, look at your spelling list. Whatever spelling list you use this year, you will find in it many polysyllabic words which have at least one syllable that follows that pattern; the words *continue, committee*, each have two syllables, which follow the pattern. Now, Charles Fries, our greatest scholar in the field of American English linguists, also working with Bloomfield's ideas, has come out with new materials. Both his and Barnhart's are built similarly, but not quite the same. Both start with the al-

phabet, teaching children to recognize the letters in upper case form and lower case form, and then turning to words written in this commonest spelling pattern. In the use of that pattern, with a very few exceptions, the consonants are perfectly dependable, the sounds they represent are always the same, and the vowel tends to be a short vowel. The children begin to read after they've learned to recognize the letters, such words as *man, can, ran, fan,* and so on. Then the first sentences in these books are such sentences as "Nan can fan Dan." "A man ran a tan van." I don't know whether you consider that an improvement over the current "Oh, oh, look," material or not. I am not sure that it is. It does have a logic which is not in the other but I can't believe that children would be more excited over Nan fanning Dan than they are over what they now read in their pre-primer. But there is a logic which underlies this that we need to look at.

The linguists are telling us to give the children one symbol for one sound until they have time to learn it. Do not drown them in the exceptions, the irregularities. You know we *could* do better with this than we do. The last time I evaluated the first pre-primer in one series, I found just what the linguists are criticizing. This little pre-primer—the very first one—had in it from cover to cover only 19 words, but there were five sounds of *a*—*Jane, Sally, father, ball,* and *a*. A linguist would look at that and say, "What utter nonsense. Why don't you give the children a chance to learn?" Give them one sound of *a* until they can get it, then go on to another. And in the scheme which Fries has worked out, which is being published by Merrill, and the scheme which Barnhart has worked out, which SRA is publishing, you find that they do ring all the changes on that pattern, going through with first the vowel *a*, and then *e*, and so on through. Then they begin adding the signal *e* to those same words as far as it fits, and children learn that *hat* becomes *hate, cut* becomes *cute, pin* becomes *pine;* again one could fill a chalkboard with words that fit that pattern. And you could also find in your sixth grade spelling list a good many words that end with that pattern, *communicate, participate, complete,* in which the final syllable ends in the consonant-vowel consonant pattern with a signal *e* on the end of it that calls for a long vowel sound.

At any rate, what these men are saying is give the children the sense of the logic of English spelling. Give them one thing at a time until they have a chance to learn it. And start at the point at which logic would cause us to start, with the letters of the alphabet. Now, Horace Mann talked about that, of course, in the same report that I was quoting from a moment ago. The phonics versus word method controversy did not start with Arthur Gate's study in the 1930's as people seem to think nowadays. It was raging in 1837 when Horace Mann wrote his report in which he said that to teach children sounds without meaning is as absurd as to teach them to chew without food. (Interesting, isn't it? To teach them sounds without meaning is as useless as to try to teach them to chew without food.) We are teaching the children some things in phonics that the linguist does not approve of. For one thing, he objects to our saying, "This letter is *m*. It says 'mm'." *The* linguist says, "No mark ever said anything. What you should be saying is, "Whenever in your talk you use the sound 'mm' this is the mark you have to put down to represent it." It is this sequence which the children must come to understand.

In the city of Philadelphia last year and again this year, first grade is being taught throughout the city using Fries' scheme: alphabet first, then the commonest spellings of English, then adding the slightly more irregular

spellings, going on from one vowel to two vowels, *cot* becomes *coat*, *got* becomes *goat*, and so on moving in the direction of the irregular spelling of English.

Paul Hanna and his wife, Jean, at Stanford in California are working from the spelling angle and a similar point of view. When I was out there last, Hanna had just put through intricate IBM processing more than 17,000 common English words, all of Thorndike's 10,000 most common words, and a few "far-out" ones for contrast. The print-up sheets as they come from the IBM machines were amazing. English is far more regular in its spelling than we have given it credit for being. We have been teaching spelling almost one word at a time ever since Ernest Horn told us in the early 30's that English is an unphonetic language. It isn't. It depends on how you look at it. At any rate, here are people trying to help us with the teaching of reading and spelling and going at it quite differently from the way in which we typically do it. I don't like all that they're doing by any means. I am not willing to put children through some of the drills that are necessary to start with the alphabet, and then spelling, and finally get to stories. However, in Philadelphia they are finding that children can do more reading that is a lot more interesting than the Dick and Jane variety and do it by the end of first grade using some of these newer methods.

Then let's contrast this for the moment with ITA. The inventor of ITA, Sir James Pitman is not a linguist. He based his system on a scheme of shorthand that his grandfather had devised, but the principle was the same linguists are talking—one symbol for one sound until the children learn it. That is why he has called the scheme Initial Teaching Alphabet—not in any sense desiring to change the writing of the alphabet in English, but giving children a better start with language. And so the children learn 44 symbols and can read some of the 300 or more books printed in ITA. The plan is that as soon as the child has mastered this and can read for meaning in ITA, you begin to show him the same material in TO—the Traditional Orthography, and soon he makes the transfer into the reading of ordinary print, such as we use daily.

In visiting schools in England and in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, the biggest ITA project in this country, to see what they're doing, I find that many children are making the transition very easily from ITA into TO in their reading, though not quite so fast as some of the material we read seems to indicate. At any rate, there is one question that has never been answered. I asked it in England at the Headquarters of ITA at the University of London; I asked it at the schools I've visited. I've asked at Bethlehem, and every where else I have gone, "What about the children's spelling and writing?" I taught first grade a good many years and it seemed to me what I was trying to do in teaching spelling and writing was to make the writing of simple words and letters automatic as early as possible. Now suppose a child achieves that, how long does it take him to lay aside the extra letters that you no longer want. When I asked it in England I was told, "We haven't got there yet." In Bethlehem, I was told, "We haven't arrived," but the idea is the same; I still have no answer.

Another scheme that is being tried for teaching reading—one that appeals to me very much because of its basic logic—is a scheme that I find in many schools in California in the teaching of reading by what they call a language approach. What they're doing, as you know, is to start with children's own talk. The teacher shows the children what she's doing as she writes what a child dictates. Perhaps she says, "Please don't talk quite so fast, I can't put it down so fast. Let me get this sentence down. Now I'm ready for the

next sentence." The children watch and if a child says, as one did, "My mother made me a birthday cake," the teacher may say, "Watch how I write that. Listen—'my-mother-made-me'; I must start those words with the same letter because the sound is the same, isn't it?" Or the child says, "My daddy doesn't do that every day," and the teacher said, "Listen—Daddy-doesn't do-day—all those words are going to have to start with the same letter. Now watch how I do it." The children learn several things at once. They're learning that what is on paper to be read originated in the minds of people, probably was put into words and sentences, and then into marks on a page or white marks on a chalkboard, and when these are read back, they say the same thing. The children are learning what reading is, what writing is; they're learning bit by bit what a sentence is and that the material is written from left to right on the chalkboard. One does not have to buy reading readiness books to teach this. As a matter of fact, the publishers don't like it because I keep telling people I wish that we might pile up and burn 99% of all reading readiness books and spend our money on more books for the library. We don't need reading readiness books. We just need a felt pen and a piece of paper or a chalkboard and a piece of chalk. We can do far better than is done with reading readiness books. Again, you see, children are also learning that every sentence starts with a signal that is a starter and ends with some sort of stopper. Children learn several things at once with this plan, and in these days, when there is so much to teach, any time we can teach more than one thing at a time, that opportunity is pure gold.

This language approach is not quite like the experience charts I used to make with first grade children. If a child came bouncing in saying, "You know what? I have a little new puppy! He's the cutest, little, tiny roly-poly thing and he can hardly walk he's so fat." We'd make a chart, and you know perfectly well what the chart looked like. It probably said, "John has a puppy." Period. "The puppy is tiny." Period. "He is brown." Period. No child ever talked that way—it isn't even good English. They're not doing it that way out in California. They're writing the child's talk more nearly as he says it. To be sure, they have some decisions to make as one must when he does this kind of thing. In most of the schools, the teachers can write just what the child says. But the question then comes, "What do you write if the child says, 'Me and him ain't got none.'?" Do you write it the way he says it? I think there's a point at which we need some experimentation. There's a school in the South in which teachers are trying the strategy of writing down for children exactly what they say. If the child says, "He go he house." They write it. If a child says, "If he bes my friend, I don't meddle him," the teacher writes it down that way, so that the child can first identify with the material. Here it is, his own words on paper; then later on, the teacher begins to say to the child, "Let's see if we can say it the way it is in the books," and moves the child in that direction. We need some research to see which is the better way to start—to start with the child's own talk whether it is standard English or not, let him identify with it first, and then gradually move him in the direction of what we call standard. Or is it better to start him out with standard English in spite of the fact that he does not talk it, and to him, it is almost a foreign language. At any rate, to go back to my point of a moment ago, we are trying a number of new schemes of teaching reading. The linguists are eager to help.

The men who came to the Indiana University conference had a good many good ideas. To be sure, they had some with which we needed to help them, and they knew very little about what we actually are doing. One man began at the very first session by contrasting what he conceived

to be our phonics method with the method that has no phonics, what is absurdly called the "word method." I said, "Now, let's go no further until I straighten you out a bit. There is no such thing as a method of teaching reading that has in it no phonics. After all, no person in his right mind would try to teach children the difference between *then* and *them, was* and *saw, on* and *no,* without calling attention to letters and sounds. But, on the other hand, neither would anyone attempt to teach by means of phonics all the *ough* words and many other irregularities. We use a combination of methods which best suit our purposes and children's needs.

I think we need to look at each new scheme that is being proposed, no matter how far out, how fantastic, how different it may sound. We must, in fairness to ourselves and to the children look at each new scheme very carefully, analyze it, and see what its basic principles are. What are the principles that underlie ITA? What are the principles that underlie Dr. Fries' work? What are the principles that underlie a language approach or any other approach you may be trying? And then look to see to what extent we can utilize those principles and build on them without going too far out into left field. I am quite sure that we can teach children one symbol for one sound utilizing only our 26 letters but it means that we must rewrite some of our material. Why can't the children in our stories be "Nan" and "Pat" and "Bob" and "Tom," utilizing that commonest spelling of English and one pattern of vowel sound until the children have a chance to learn it? We may have to add a few sight words like *a, the,* and *said* in order to do it. But we can do that and perhaps give children better stories than now appear in most of the pre-primers. We need to look at what is being done with the language approach and see how much of it we can weave into the work that we're doing. Often, at the remedial level, teachers find that the best way to start a boy who isn't interested in reading is to discover what he *is* interested in, take down his story, and then perhaps utilize the scheme that Fernald and Keller gave us so long ago in California. We can show the child the process of writing what he wants to say, and of reading what he wants to read. We need to find basic principles and try them out in a variety of ways.

My greatest quarrel at the present with many of the reading people—and I am quarreling with them—is that they have a great tendency to look at whatever is new and say it is no panacea. That, of course, brings us right back to the point where we have been for a long time, busily moving along with basal readers and they *have* given us good values and we shall probably continue to use them. But, we do need to contrast what we are doing with what is being done at many other places. You could not find books labeled "readers" in England beyond about Grade 2 because they say that as soon as a child has taken off in reading, as soon as he can read for meaning, he should read books, not readers—books! I keep urging my graduate students and anybody else who'll listen to me, to get busy and write for teachers a book that could be used from fourth grade through sixth, giving teachers a clear picture of what their job is: developing reading skills; teaching children to read in the content areas; teaching the refinement of reading, the adaptation of reading to different kinds of processes, different kinds of materials, different purposes. Then the book should show teachers how they can do that with a page of verbal arithmetic problems, in a social studies book, in a science book, in any kind of book—it need not be done in a book labeled "reader." We have formed that habit of utilizing only readers for two reasons: there was a time when we didn't have many books other than the textbooks—now we have a wealth of books. More than two thousand new

titles come off the presses of the United States every year. To be sure, among those will be only a few which will live because they have high literary quality and are fascinating to children, but there will be a lot more that will live because they will help children understand the world, books that have to do with people of different places and with science. Also there are many that are pure, unadulterated trash and we have to learn to distinguish these. But we now have masses of material and with the help of NDEA we can now build up our libraries with more material. We must see to it that our teachers *do* remember in the intermediate grades that they *must teach reading.* But then, so must I with my doctoral candidates when I help them learn how to interpret a type of research.

A favorite history professor at Indiana University was a man who always told his freshmen, "Bring your textbook to class, and we'll spend the first week or so talking about how to read history." They would read and talk, talk and read, and mark and write in the margins to help locate the important points. Then he would say to his students, "I'm going to give a quiz on Monday. Get ready for it the best way you can." After the quiz papers were handed back, he might say, "Mr. X, how did you get on?" Perhaps Mr. X's answer might be, "Well, I read that material three times. I don't know why I did so poorly." But Dr. Kolmeyer might answer, "One doesn't read history dead level three times, he finds the keypoints, and uses those as the pegs to hang his thinking on as he builds up the supporting details." This man was teaching reading.

The teaching of reading is a job that has to be done all the way through school; every teacher of literature in high school and college is continuously doing it. We need not do it in books called "readers" but we must see to it that the job gets done. We need to beware, too, of our interpretation of some of the criticisms that come of our teaching of reading. When Rickover and some of the others tell us that our children aren't doing as well as Ivan does, we need to remember that not only Ivan but all the children in Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Finland start reading at seven, not at six.

The first Fulbright scholar, who worked with me after the war wanted to visit schools in our area, and so I sent him first to the Laboratory School and then into the city schools, then out into the county. He came back to my office one day saying, "Miss Strickland, why is a wealthy nation in such a hurry to push its children into reading? We teach reading at age seven and we don't have as many problems as you do." We need to remember this when people urge us to start earlier with teaching reading.

It seems to me that we need to look at what scholars and others are suggesting and put all this in some sort of perspective recognizing that we have formed some habits in the United States which differ from those of some other countries. We need to look at what Sweden, a highly literate country, is doing; to look at what England is doing, and see if we can't find ways to improve. And as we look at what other people are offering, whether in our own country or abroad, we may find material that will help us improve our teaching of reading.

This means taking a little here, a little there and putting it together in our own way. I am distressed always when I see people look at new materials and lay them aside without ever trying them, without looking to see whether they can use a fragment of the material but not the whole of it. For instance, we have two first grades in our laboratory school that are using Dr. Fries' ideas exactly, but not with Dr. Fries' material; we are using Dr. Seuss instead. You know, his *ABC Book,* his *Hop on Pop, and One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish,*

Blue Fish, and you know that children love them. We need badly to improve the teaching of reading. The linguists are trying to work with us to help us, but all too often we push aside the help of these people. We have proved that our way carries us quite a distance toward national literacy but not far enough so that we can sit back and be content with our teaching of reading. We *can* do better. Our task is to look at every new idea, take from it all that we can use, and adapt it to what we know about children since we are the experts when it comes to knowing what can be done with children. We need to try out new ideas a little here, a little there, building new eclectic schemes all our own.

As we utilize the best of these ideas, we must make sure that we feed to our children quantities of the best that had been written in English. After all, we want children to know what the potential of their language is, so we turn to literature. We read to children fine material, so that they learn what the power of language is, what language can do in the world, and what it does. Language can build friendships or it can tear them down, it can create problems or it can solve problems; language is a powerful thing. We all need to speak it well and learn to read it so that we can have a part in all of the vicarious experience that is available. There is much for us to do, but that's what makes teaching interesting, isn't it?

DISCUSSION GROUP EXCERPTS

Linguistics is the scientific study of spoken language. We speak as a whole—voice, words, and gestures. Each language has its own sound pattern. A child never learns to read better than he can speak. The Linguistic approach includes four areas: sound, grammar, word, and rhetoric. Linguistic specialists begin where the child is with sounds. One Linguistic approach is ITA. In ITA there are 44 graphic symbols and each symbol has one sound.

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A teacher should approach language from a meaningful point of view. The claims of various schools of thought frequently leave the teacher uncertain of what to do in the classroom. Language changes in a number of ways. There are changes in vocabulary. Words disappear or take on new meanings as society changes. Pronunciation similarly changes.

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Pupils use adult speech patterns at a very early age. Language that a child learns in his home and environment has a great influence on him. Whether he comes from a verbal or nonverbal home is important. Children need to develop "wardrobes of language." When we try to tell a child that what he has learned at home isn't right, then we create a problem for the child.

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The child should write his thinking on paper. He should write as he speaks. In this way children get use to the fact that writing is speaking written down. We shouldn't worry so much about accuracy at first. With first and second graders, we should not put markings on their work. We should let them compose their own stories about something in which they are very interested. This will stimulate them to want to read more about the subject. It is very important for teachers to accept the language of children as they come to school.

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We may be too restrictive with children about talking in the elementary school. The teacher might utilize a listening laboratory. It's important not to write children to death and to avoid stereotyped drill. The teacher should help children expand their sentences. Sometimes when we make corrections, we are in essence saying to a child, "We don't like your family." A positive approach to making corrections would be helpful; spirits do not "droop" when corrections are handled in this way.

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A teacher needs to listen to her children. She needs to be an accepting person. When a child's self-image improves, there is a better chance that his work will improve. The teacher can have children listen for "the best" in each others "speeches." Teachers rarely hear what children really say. They fail to note the emotional import of statements and fail to notice the speech patterns of children. Teachers should use tape recordings of unstructured discussion and listen carefully to the speech patterns of children in conversation. More than that, teachers should note where children are in speech patterns and build language programs around this level.

A teacher can show different meanings of the same word by the way the word is used and by applying dictionary usage of the study of alternate words, origin of words, stems, and prefixes. Teachers should explain and study words in spelling and phonics and teach the meanings of words all through the grades as children contact words in their various curriculum areas. In music new words and meanings can be taught such as technical music terms as refrain, chorus, and verse.

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In kindergarten, especially, the whole program depends upon oral language and the understanding of the spoken word. A teacher should use rhymes and poetry to teach and hear the various sounds of letters. By the changing of a sentence from a telling sentence to a question or exclamatory sentence, the teacher has used the same sentence but in different ways. The teacher can also have children take words and put them together on a flannel board or blackboard to make sentences. The teacher should take the sentences that the children have written, put them on the board, and reconstruct them correctly by using children's ideas and participation.

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The teacher should give opportunities for oral growth through various kinds of reports. She should point out to children what a tremendous vocabulary we have made from 26 letters. A teacher can have children start with the letters of the alphabet and see how many words they can make. They can play other games by using a word such as Thanksgiving to see how many words they can make from the letters of certain words. The teacher should let children make up nonsense words and rhymes using various sounds and sound patterns. Children also can be freed from the use of speech and express themselves in pantomime and gestures.

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